

The most authentic version of the earliest pioneer-settlement of Brownhelm Township, was relayed by pioneer Peter P. Pease,
(as later transcribed by Wilbur H. Phillips, in 1933) :

“In 1816, Colonel Henry Brown (of Stockbridge, Mass.), visited Ohio for the purpose of selecting a location for a colony as a settlement for about one dozen families who were [already, and collectively] engaged in the enterprise.

On the Fourth of July [1816] he set foot on Township No. 6, Nineteenth Range (now Brownhelm [Twp.]) in the Connecticut Western Reserve; and he concluded to make a purchase of the same. [Meaning, to purchase much of this Township.]

Himself and two young men, D.S. [[typo; D.T.]] Baldwin and William Lincoln, spent a week or more reconnoitering the township -- [at that time, being] an unbroken wilderness; and commenced opening a pathway for wagons, from the lake, to the center and the south part of the town[-ship]. They succeeded in getting about four miles [inland] --- then returned to Stockbridge[[*]].

On October 23, Brown [again] left [Stockbridge] with three young men for the new settlement, and arrived [here] on the tenth of November [1816]. Names of the [three] young men: Elihu Millard, Mr. Risley and [“myself”] Peter Pindar Pease. [We] commenced building the first house — of logs, of course.

[On] December 2, Brown [again] left [here] for the East -- leaving us three [young men] to winter in this dense forest, to chop down and clear the heavy timber, and to commence cultivating the soil.

Novelty kept up our spirits for a month or two, (until our small library had been well perused, and several juice-harps worn out), then we felt lonesome and began to sigh for society; but we continued until about the first of March, when William Lincoln arrived with an ox team loaded with pork and tools, furniture, bedding, etc. Then we took a new start [i.e., renewed energy] and went on cheerfully --- [until] June 3, 1817, came the first family or families.

[Col. Brown and] Brown's family did not arrive until May, 1818. By that time, about one dozen* families had settled in [this] town[-ship].” [*- “dozen”, certainly meaning those same, original, “dozen”.]

Pease's personal recollections therefore disprove several of the myths which have often been repeated about those pioneer-settlement years:

“The first pioneer-settlers of Brownhelm Township arrived in 1817”: FALSE. (Obviously, Peter Pindar Pease should have been attributed as being the first true pioneer-settler, in November of 1816.)

“The first pioneer-settler family, was the family of Levi Shepard, July 4th, 1817”: FALSE. (The arrival of the first “family”, here, occurred about JUNE 3, 1817.)

[An outlandish “legend” about that Shepard family's arrival, seems to have been originally contrived by Levi Shepard, himself. (See the attached ‘history’ by A.J. Page, written in ‘1856’.)]

“Col. Henry Brown settled here in 1817”. That is definitely false. (Many records confirm that Brown, with his family, did not “settle” here until 1818.)

“Crop-failures on the East Coast in 1816, prompted those first pioneer-settlers to move to Ohio”: FALSE. (P.Pease confirms that a DOZEN families had already “engaged in the enterprise” with Col. Brown -- earlier in the year 1816.

Their mutual agreement therefore must have been formulated considerably prior to Col. Brown's initial departure in Spring of 1816, from Stockbridge.)
[More, below, about those “dozen families” who all migrated from that area of Massachusetts.]

[[*-- **note:** apparently, D.T. Baldwin returned to Stockbridge with Col. Brown in 1816; but perhaps only very briefly, merely to bring his brother George Baldwin back to central Brownhelm Twp., (to the property that their father purchased on “Twp.-Lot 43”).

Daniel T. Baldwin and his brother George were documented as occupying that Baldwin farm on “Twp.-Lot 43”, by the end of that same year (1816). (By 1820, Daniel had married divorcee Sophia (Reid) Shepard, and moved to the village of Mouth-of-Black-River.)]]

According to Peter P. Pease, “about a dozen families were engaged in the enterprise” of relocating from the vicinity of Stockbridge, Mass., to this specific area of Ohio. And, the (attached) '1856' history indicates that most of those families had belonged to the same 'church' in Stockbridge.

That church was the Congregational Church of Stockbridge; its records list these later Brownhelm Twp. residents, as being former members, there:

Mary (WELLS) BROWN [first wife of Henry Brown]; Harriet (SEYMOUR) BROWN [second wife of Henry Brown]; Peter Pindar PEASE; [Deacon] Stephen JAMES; [Deacon] Levi SHEPARD and his wife Sophia; Elisha PECK and his wife Melicent; Enos COOLEY and his wife Anna; Lucy (COOPER) SAGE-BACON [wife of Orrin SAGE, and later the wife of George BACON Jr.] ; Grandison FAIRCHILD and his wife Nancy; Alfred AVERY and his wife Elizabeth; Electa (PEASE) LINCOLN; Wm. ALVERSON and his wife/widow Harriet (FAIRCHILD) ALVERSON-BENHAM.

In fact, all evidence indicates that this location in Ohio, was pre-planned and specifically intended to be their new “faith-based community”:

“A meeting [for religious-worship] was held by Deacon James, on the Sabbath before July 4th, 1817*; and, from that day to this, public worship has been held on the Sabbath.” [*-Therefore was first held on June 29th, 1817, here.]

That statement (from the '1867' history of Brownhelm Twp.), is evidence that these same families, fully intended to form their new community, here, upon the same paradigm of their devoutly religious prior lifestyle in Stockbridge.

Another indication is that Col. Brown donated 100 acres of his land here, in 1826, “for the education of pious young men for the ministry of the Gospel”:

To all people to whom these presents shall come greeting know ye that I Henry Brown of Brownhelm in the county of Lorain & State of Ohio in consideration of laying foundation for the education of pious young men for the ministry of the Gospel & for the general benefit of the Western Reserve College do hereby give grant sell and convey unto Caleb Pitkin Elizur Wright John Seward Jr. Benjamin Fenn Joshua B Sherwood Talman Fitch Stephen I Bradstreet Simeon Woodruff Hamman Kingsbury Harvey Goe & David Hudson Trustees of the western Reserve College the following described piece of land in said Brownhelm being the easterly part of lot number ninety in Township number six in the nineteenth range of the Connecticut Western Re-

[That property was apparently never physically utilized for that purpose. But shortly later, Brown helped to establish Oberlin College (which originally also had been conceived by other theologians). Additionally, Brown was the first “acting-President” of Oberlin College.]

‘It was essentially a Stockbridge colony that took possession of the place’...

That accurate statement was made by (theologian) James Fairchild, (in his published '1867' “Early Settlement and History of Brownhelm”); although Fairchild stated, (obviously in error), that *“there was no organized or concerted effort”* to establish this “colony”.

But, undoubtedly, Peter P. Pease was accurate by stating that a dozen Stockbridge families ***“were engaged in the enterprise”***. (Pease was an “eyewitness” to his own narrative about that earliest time-period. However, Fairchild was less-than-a-year-old baby when the Fairchild family arrived here in Sept., 1818. As a direct result, some of Fairchild's statements were not accurate, being merely based upon hearsay and supposition. But, later “historians” unquestioningly repeated ALL of Fairchild's assertions; and those later authors were entirely oblivious to Fairchild's intermittent irrationality.)

That overall 'plan' had certainly begun long before the “cold summer of 1816” . Notwithstanding that it is ludicrous to assert that merely due to a “cold summer”, there, that a dozen established Massachusetts farmers would be motivated to relocate into the vast forests, here, requiring years of intensive labor to turn this wilderness into usable farmland, and with zero knowledge about what the climate here, would bring during those same years.

Here is another local example of the perpetuation of nonsensical assertions:

“Levi Shepard and his wife --- without indicating their intentions to their fellow travelers --- were careful to lead the way as they approached the selected territory, so as to be first on the ground. They crossed over the line (between Black River and Brownhelm), a short distance ahead of their associates; thus, they properly have the honor of being the first settlers.” Levi Shepard, himself, seems to have been the original source (in his much-later years) for that anecdote. However, prior to arriving here, he was fully aware that there were several other “settlers” awaiting his arrival --- which obviously makes those actions (and that statement) very peculiar. (And, even more peculiar, is the later attempt by “local-historians”, to make Shepard's assertion seem rational --- by propounding the honor of being a first *“entire family”*, as being greater than the honor of simply being the “first settler”.)

[It was common for 20th-Century "historians" to carelessly repeat nonsensical assertions from earlier 'histories'. (And, likewise, much too common by current 21st-Century "historians".)]

{The below 'History' is extracted from the
Elyria OH, *Independent Democrat*;
26 Nov 1856 (page 1)}

HISTORY OF BROWNHHELM

Lorain County, Ohio.

by A. J. PAGE

[with annotations and corrections which reflect Peter P. Pease's statements, etc.]

The tract of land which now comprises this Township, was purchased from the State of Connecticut [[error*]], for the sum of forty thousand dollars, by Col. Henry Brown, of Stockbridge, Massachusetts. [[*- see end-notes, below]]

Brown first came to this town[-ship] in the fall [Summer] of the year 1816, bringing with him several individuals -- names unknown [[Baldwin, Lincoln, etc.]]. After having chopped a few acres, and erected a small house, he returned to Massachusetts. In the following Spring, he came back, accompanied by his family [[error]], and settled on the Lake shore in the western [no; eastern] part of the township, being the first settler [[error]].

Brown is said to have been a man of a liberal education, with a clear intellect, and stern, uncompromising will. Independence and inflexibility of purpose were very marked traits in his character.

He was kind, generous, and hospitable. Many of the early settlers were recipients of his practical benevolence. For many years he was the soul of the settlement --- the leading man in town. He filled various offices in town[-ship] and county; and - by his promptness, prudence, sagacity and integrity - secured, in an eminent degree, the confidence and respect of his fellow citizens. He died in 1843. He had a large family, only three of whom survive. (Frederick, the oldest son, is a Presbyterian Clergyman, and ranks among the first in his profession.)

A few months after Brown's arrival, the families of Levi Shepard, Stephen James, and Sylvester Barnum, moved in. They reached this town on the morning of the 4th of July, 1817. [[Precisely on "the 4th", was apparently an embellishment. They seem to have actually been present here by Sunday June 29th. Notwithstanding that several sources confirm that Stephen James and his sons had already arrived here prior to those other two families, (probably on June 3, if Pease's memory was accurate).]]

Shepard settled on the Lake shore, but now resides at Bacon's Corners [a.k.a. "Brownhelm Center", etc.], and is the only living one of those three men. Shepard was born in Wooster [Worcester], Massachusetts, in the year 1784.

Moved with his parents to Stockbridge; remained there until 1817, when he emigrated to this town. For a number of years during the early settlement, he supplied the place of a dentist in extracting "troublesome molars." (It is said that he was a capital operator -- and never seemed more in his element than when pulling a tooth.) He is small in stature, of an active, energetic temperament, and good practical common-sense mind. He has a large fund of anecdotes, loves a joke, and tells a story with a relish.

[[Obviously, therefore, much of A.J. Page's information was acquired directly from Levi Shepard (whose "stories" were not as consistently reliable as P.P. Pease's facts).]]

Sylvester Barnum remained only a few years in this State.

(Most of his family having [fatally] fallen victims to a malignant malady which prevailed for a number of years in this settlement, he returned to Massachusetts, where he died.)

[That "malignant malady" is explained farther below.]

Deacon James was born in Stamford, Massachusetts [Conn.], in the year 1767, and died in this town[-ship] in 1840[1841]. He is said to have been a man of strong native talent, rare intelligence, clear discriminating judgment, and deep earnest piety. He was a prominent member of the church, a liberal supporter of Christian ordinances, an influential member of society, and was deservedly respected by the entire community.

In the fall of the same year (1817) the families of Ebenezer Scott, Solomon Whittlesey, Alva Curtis, Joseph Swift, William Alverson and Peter P. Pease [err!] moved in from Stockbridge.

In the following Spring (1818) the families of Benj. Bacon, Enos Cooley, Anson Cooper, Orin Sage, George Bacon, Elisha Peck and Grandison Fairchild moved in from the same place.

During the remainder of the year 1818, and up to the fall of 1819, the settlement received numerous additional accessions from Massachusetts, so that at this period it embraced about fifteen families.

The settlers did not forget their New England [religious] educations -- as apparent from the fact that on the 10th of June, 1819, a religious society was formed by Revs. Treat and Seward (of Portage county), consisting of nineteen members --- seventeen of whom originally belonged to the [same] church in Stockbridge. In the succeeding Fall, a log structure for public worship was erected, between the Ridge and the Lake Shore, (on land now owned by Pearley Moulton), [[Twp.-Lot "28"]], and was used for that purpose for many years [[until circa-1832]].

The first sermon preached in this town was by the Rev. Alfred H. Betts. He was also the first-settled minister, (commencing his labors as Pastor, in October, 1826, which relation he sustained for more than 12 years). Mr. Betts was one of the ministerial pioneers, and may be truly represented as the "father of the church" in this portion of the country -- an earnest, faithful laborer in the cause of Christianity, and has doubtless done more than any other person, to mould the sentiments and institutions of this region. He yet remains a resident of this town[*], and still continues to preach every Sabbath. [*- township]

This town[-ship] was principally settled by immigrants from Stockbridge, Mass.; and the pioneers were proverbial for integrity, industry and sobriety. That they were, however, addicted to some of the habits of the present day, is evidenced by an incident communicated to the writer (by Mr. Levi Shepard). It seems that one of the settlers who was an inveterate tobacco chewer, but not having enough to last him over the Sabbath, went to one of his neighbors in a distant part of the township to procure a supply. Having obtained a 'quantum sufficit', he started homeward just at nightfall. Darkness soon enveloped him -- he became bewildered -- in fact, lost. The wolves, (which were very numerous), beset him, and our hero was obliged to seek security on the long arm of an old chestnut tree. Here he remained through the long hours of a weary night, (with the unmerciful howling of a hungry pack of wolves), and with naught to do except seriously and soberly philosophize upon the singular consequences often arising from a pernicious habit. Morning, however, released him --- and it is said that he came down from the tree, a wiser man: not long afterward, he was seen with a total-abstinence pledge in his possession -- and chewing-tobacco was the first in the list of things abstained-from.

The township [-government] was organized and the first election held April 5th, 1819, at the house of Geo. Bacon. Thirty-seven votes were polled, and the election resulted in these choices: Benjamin Bacon and Levi Shepard for Justices of the Peace, Calvin Leonard, Levi Shepard and Alva Curtis, Trustees; Wm. Alverson, Treasurer; Solomon Whittlesey, Assessor; and Anson Cooper, Clerk.

(Three of the above persons are now living, viz: Bacon, Shepard and Whittlesey.)

The township-board met the ensuing June; but very little business, however, was transacted. Indeed, the record for a number of years is remarkably brief.

The first school house, a small frame building [error*], was erected in the year 1819, on a pleasant elevation overlooking Hoover[?] Creek, about one half mile east[?] of the centre. It is yet standing (though somewhat weather-worn and antiquated in appearance), and is now used for a Town-Hall. It is the only memorial of olden time at present -- and as such is regarded with great veneration by a majority of the people (who go so far in testifying their respect, as to refuse to provide any other place for holding elections).

[[*- Other sources indicate that the 1819 "school" was merely a log structure.

(The first frame-structure school was built in 1824, on that same site.)]]

The establishment of the first school was attended with many embarrassments. It is true, the pioneers had plenty of children -- but then they had no money. Of course, a teacher could not be procured without this essential. Nevertheless, something must be done, (because the young ones must have schooling). Here "Yankee ingenuity" was put to the test; it resulted in hitting upon the following plan: Grandison Fairchild, one of the settlers, possessing in an eminent degree, (the necessary school-master qualifications), was employed as teacher. He agreed to receive payment for his services in this manner: each person sending a scholar, was to chop wood for him, a specified number of days. And thus, the first school was sustained in this town[-ship].

Fairchild is still a resident. He is somewhat advanced in years, though he still retains the vigor and sprightliness of youth. He is characterized by deep piety and unbounded sympathy for the down-trodden and oppressed. He has always been first and foremost in every true reform; he was a radical abolitionist years ago, (even when the term was a reproach). His family is quite large. (Two of his sons are connected with Oberlin College, as Professors.)

The first summer school was taught by a Mrs. Alverson[*]. (I believe she is yet living.) [*- G.Fairchild's sister was Harriet Alverson]

Thus far, the settlement had been unusually prosperous. But the appearance at this time of a singular and fatal endemic, interrupted its progress and threw a shade of gloom and sorrow over it. Many fell victims to its ravages -- while others (with aching hearts and desponding spirits), retreated back to their New England homes.

This disease presented itself as early as the year 1818; and continued to increase in violence each succeeding year until 1826, when it gradually declined. It was known in the locality by the name of the "sick stomach"; in others, it was termed "the Fires", "the Trembles", "Milk Sickness", etc. Its prevalence was not limited to any season or description of weather, though it occurred more frequently during the months of July, August and September. It was generally, fatal -- though recovery sometimes, ensued. In such cases, years were necessary to restore the person afflicted, to wonted health; and, there is doubt in some minds, whether an individual once seriously attacked, ever fully recovered.

Much speculation has arisen relative to the cause of this disease. The cause undoubtedly in man, is the flesh, milk, etc., the product of animals laboring under it. But the cause in the inferior animals is yet shrouded in mystery. The most popular opinion is in favor of a vegetable origin. The cause, whatever it may be, seems to disappear as the country becomes cleared and the land cultivated.

Brownhelm is not without interest in the matter of ancient fortifications and mounds. The one most worthy of notice is on the bank of the Vermillion river, near the residence of J. Swift, Jr. It is called "Fort Scott", (named for one of a company of persons who were land-looking in an early day, and who camped on this ground for the night). The fortification stands on a point of land nearly horizontal with the upland, and projecting out from the same in the form of an ox-bow -- with a 'neck' not more than forty feet wide, where it intersects the main or upland. It is about one-hundred and twenty feet above the level of the River -- with steep banks, (which were once undoubtedly, perpendicular). Across the neck of this point where it connects with the main land, are three embankments and a like number of trenches. Two of them are as near as they could be made to each other, and the other some eight rods distant. These embankments and trenches are now plain to be seen, and at the time of the first settlement of the township, were very distinct, it being some eight or ten feet from the bottom of the trenches to the top of the embankment. Back of this earth-work, on the main land and but a short distance therefrom are many mounds, containing human bones, usually found in such localities in the west. However, these mounds have, within a few years, been very much defaced by the lands being plowed and cultivated.

About the year 1845, David Sturtevant, who then owned the land, was opening one of these mounds out of curiosity, when he found many relics unusual to such mounds. They consisted of some fifty or sixty pieces resembling pearl, nearly the size of a half-dollar, and about two-thirds as thick. Upon one side of these pieces (as they were all alike) was engraved a palace, (of the Chinese type), with a veranda in front. In this veranda sat a personage, attired in the Chinese style, taking a social whiff of some narcotic. On the other side of these pieces, were various devices resembling the Chinese characters for letters and words.

Upon the opposite side of the river are fortifications of a similar character -- but not nearly as distinct. Mounds are to be found in many other localities in the township, and curiosities of a varied character have been found.

Many incidents are related, connected with the early settlement of this town[-ship]. Most of them, however, are such as are typical to the settlement of any new country; consequently they would be of but little interest.

The first child born was Henry Brown Holcomb. (His present whereabouts - unknown.

The first marriage was that of Joseph Swift to Miss Root. (Swift resides in Henrietta [Twp.])

One early incident is substantially as follows: Joseph Swift was hoeing corn in month of June, 1829, on the flats near the Vermillion river, and hearing the crackling of the brush and dried weeds near the river, he at first supposed that it was caused by cattle - and, knowing that cattle should not be in that proximity to his cornfield, he went towards the river. But he found the noise originated from quite a different cause from what he supposed. It was caused by the moving of a large serpent. (Swift, in his rather frightened condition, did not venture near enough to take very accurate dimensions. But, from ascertaining the height of the

weeds, afterwards, he estimated that it carried its head from four to five feet from the ground -- and from the motion of the weeds in the vicinity of its tail, he should judge that it was from twenty five to thirty feet in length.)

Swift left the 'stranger' to pursue its course towards the waters of Lake Erie, unmolested -- as he didn't fancy a combat with a serpent of its dimensions. [[Note: Although fantastical anecdotal "tales" typically are not suitable for distributing in an authoritative 'history', but, perhaps Swift, himself, was A.J.Page's direct source of that specific anecdote; and, therefore, it is currently included in this updated publication.]]

TO BE CONTINUED.....

Research is ongoing to determine such things as:

Why were there “**Surplus Lands**” within the western portion of Brownhelm Township; and when exactly did this “gore-shaped” (meaning, long and tapered) area of Surplus Lands, become officially included within this township?

When did Asher Miller and Nathan Shalor actually become the original owner-investors* of this township? And when did the Rockwell family become involved? And why did the “Connecticut School Fund” become re-involved?

Why was (future-named) Brownhelm Township still almost entirely unsold in 1816 --- but pioneer-settlement of other local lakeshore townships had already begun by 1810?

Exactly **what portion** of this entire township did Col. Henry Brown actually purchase? And how much of it did he lose due to mortgage foreclosure? And, previous to Brown's purchase, were there any prior additional purchasers of any individual lots within this township? And did they ever reside here?

Why did (theologian) James Fairchild diminish the fact that Col. Henry Brown was indeed “at the helm” of this entire endeavor to establish a religious-colony, here? (And, why did Fairchild oddly assert that the word “*helm*” is a variation of the word “home”?)

Who was John Hettel; and when did he become the “president” of the “**Brownhelm Historical Society**”. (Not to be confused with the “*Brownhelm Township Historical Society*”), nor the 'Brownhelm Historical Association'.)

What year did the 'Brownhelm Historical Association' legitimately become a **formal** 'association' (and who was their first 'president', etc.)? And did that Association shortly afterward enlist the assistance of an attorney, to determine the legal status of “Brown's Lake Road Cemetery”; and was that attorney's opinion officially distributed on behalf of that Association; and to whom? And did the Brownhelm Historical Association later reverse course, and even attempt to acquire part of that same “public burialground” property for the purpose of converting it into a “nature preserve”? And, ultimately, was the entire final endeavor improper, because that “public burialground”, even still, technically belongs to Col. Henry Brown's heirs? (And, do the individual graves still belong to the families of the persons interred there?) And, was the portion of that “public burialground” (which is currently beneath housing-structures), ever officially truly “decommissioned” as a “public burialground”; or is that 'half' also legally still a “sanctified public burialground”, also belonging to Col. Brown's heirs? And if so, then why is the Mayor of the City of Vermilion, (et al), complicit in the violation of the stipulations of Col. Henry Brown's nearly-200-year-old legal-contract?

Was the original Brownhelm Highschool structure built in “1896” (as stated by Mrs. T. Schnaak); or was it built in “1889” (according to B.H.A. “school historian” M. Brill); or, was it actually instead built in **'1899'**, upon the site where an '1884' schoolhouse was inexplicably torn down for that purpose? And, was the “racist” young boy who was partly the direct cause of the “Oberlin-Wellington (Slave) Rescue”, the same as M.S. “Shake” Boynton who later became the first Superintendent of this highschool?

And many, many more mysteries that have been previously unresolved; and many other myths that are yet to be debunked.

(c)2023; “Brownhelm Township Historical Society”

*- “TOWN(-ship) number six, in range nineteen, of the Connecticut Western Reserve was drawn in the draft [-lottery] by Asher Miller and Nathan Shalor. It originally extended south to tract fourteen and fifteen, in the nineteenth range, and included nearly a third of the territory now embraced in the township of Henrietta.”